1: Metraux / E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

249 contained a very sweet juice which the inhabitants presented to us very frequently, and particularly whenever we asked for something to drink." [271] Only fifty years ago the natives quenched their thirst during their journeys with sugar cane. Even more recently uncultivated sugar cane has been found on several parts of the island. The juice was used as an ointment [302] or as an adhesive upon which pigments were stuck in face painting, and the [342] leaves served as hut coverings. Sugar cane was consumed in great quantities [824] during the feasts. The name for a fragment of sugar cane planted in the soil is *pupura*.

Bananas

245 All early travelers (186, p. 13; 90, p. 101; 53, vol. 1, p. 288) mention [439] bananas, *maika* (*Musa sapientum*), as products offered by the islanders for [262] trade. They were extensively cultivated, for some Spaniards under Gonzalez (90, p. 123) visited a plantation near Vinapu "which stretched about a quarter of a league in extent, and was about half that distance in breadth." Lisiansky (143, p. 86) noticed that "every house was planted round with bananas and sugar cane."

The trees in these plantations were disposed "in the order called quincunx" (130, vol. 2, p. 259) and "planted in straight lines by the cord" (130, vol. 1, p. 76). According to G. Forster (83, vol. 1, p. 571), who went through some plantations near the present Hanga-roa, "the bananas were all growing in holes one foot deep, which were supposed to be contrived for collecting rain, and preserving it for a longer time about the plant." A century later, Thomson (215, p. 456) states that "bananas are grown in holes a foot or more deep and with sloping sides, designed to catch and hold the rain water as long as possible about the roots of the plant." Whenever it was possible natural cavities were utilized, in which decayed branches and leaves made a thick layer of fertile humus. The richest banana plantations of today are located on the west coast near the leper house and the ancient village of Ana-o-hoka, between ahu Akapu and Ahu-te-peu. There, in some places the lava crust which covered enormous subterranean cavities has sunk, forming holes about 10 to 15 feet deep. Trees planted there in former days thrived on a rich, damp soil, protected from the sea winds.

245 At present the natives count ten varieties of bananas, some of which have 192 recently come from Tahiti: *maika-pukapuka, maika-korotea, maika-hihi, maika-pia, maika-naho-a, maika-pahu* (today extinct), *maika-puru-ino, maika-rio, maika-perora, maika-hiva* (a foreign variety), and *maika-tamoa* (introduced from Samoa). The fruit is still an important staple food of the Easter Islanders. In the past it must have been even more important. The shoots of banana used for planting were called *huri*.

824 Dried banana leaves (*kaka*) were once used as house coverings and the

lt Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

white men. However, no early visitor mentions the arrowroot and it is not cultivated today. It may have been replaced by manioc.

Coconut

In the second part of the nineteenth century, some coconut trees or simply some coconuts (*niu, makoi*) were brought to the island either by Easter Islanders returning from Tahiti or by missionaries. This explains why Palmer (171, p. 170) saw large coconut bowls, although he was unable to find any coconut trees. It is probably to that attempt at coconut cultivation that Tepano alluded when he told me that in his mother's time there were some coconut trees at Poike, near Maunga Teatea. They are purported to have been destroyed during the war between the Miru and the Tupa-hotu. Tepano affirms having seen ancient boxes made from coconuts. The two trees now growing on the island were planted by Salmon.

Foreign Plants

Plants of European or American origin, now cultivated on Easter Island, are peas (*pipi*), beans (*ariko*), melons (*melone*), watermelons (*santia*), onions (*onioni*), manioc (*manioka*), maize (*tarake*), pepper (*oporo*), and pineapple (*anana*). Fig trees (*pika*) and mulberries (*monamona*) are abundant but the natives care little for their fruits.

The island soil is particularly favorable for beans and though the islanders complain that potatoes do not thrive, those of the English resident are the best I have tasted anywhere. The Williamson and Balfour Company is trying to develop the cultivation of maize by the natives, who have prospects of selling it at good prices, but few islanders have taken advantage of the opportunity.

Comparison with Cultivated Plants on other Polynesian Islands

The plants introduced and cultivated on Easter Island in early days are all Polynesian species. Due to the cold climate there are no breadfruit trees on the island and the two coconut trees do not bear fruit. In this respect Easter Island resembles Rapa where, because of the cold, there are no breadfruits, coconuts, and probably no pandanus.

Easter Island has no kava though kava was consumed on Mangareva and in the Marquesas whence the Easter Islanders probably came. Perhaps the Easter Island climate is unfavorable. The name kava is used on Easter Island in the composite form *kavakava atua*, designating a fern. Kava is also absent on Rapa though the climate there is suitable for its growth.

In the Marquesas as on Easter Island sugar cane and paper mulberry were cultivated in enclosures (104, p. 67).